

MOST DARING BANDIT KNOWN IN AMERICAN HISTORY

Harry Tracy's Brief Career Marked By a Succession of Cold-Blooded Murders and Audacious Escapes from the Hands of the Officers.

His Whole Record Made Up of Shocking Crime and Cruelty—Exercises the Ingenuity of Satan Himself in Eluding Justice and Vengeance.

THE hand of the law or vengeance may ere this have brought to death or capture the most daring bandit in the annals of American history—Harry Tracy.

For more than a month the bravest and most daring guardians of the peace in the far Northwest have been engaged in the most difficult undertaking of their lives, and have, up to the time of the present writing, met with naught but ignominious failure. Harry Tracy, who has been rightly termed "America's first and only Mussolini," has started and thoroughly aroused the interest not only of the entire country, but of the whole world by his reckless daring and wonderful prowess in eluding the hand of the law.

The lone man who held up all Italy has a Western double, who for pure criminal ability and cold-blooded murder has never had an equal on the American continent. Even the terrible deeds of the James gang, the Younger brothers, and other notorious bands of desperadoes and "man killers" pale before the record of Tracy's shocking record of murders and crimes of every hue and description. Up to the time of writing his total number of victims is nine, to say nothing of the number of persons wounded and the vast amount of property stolen and made off with.

Aiming for Canada.

Since his daring escape from the Salem, Ore., penitentiary, the vicious bandit has been steadily making his way northward toward the Canadian border, whence it is evidently his intention to cross into the rugged and sparsely-settled portions of British Columbia. All along his course he has eluded his pursuers by sheer daring and bloodthirstiness. He has hesitated at no crime, no matter what its nature. To sacrifice the life of a fellow-man seemed as nothing to him. Even his bare subsistence has been gained at the point of a revolver. To all appearances he knows no fear and is lost to all the better impulses of humanity.

He has passed through well-settled portions of the country where farm houses were comparatively plentiful and where his capture was imminent, rather than go a few miles out of his course and take to the mountainous country, where he would have the officers of the law at a decided disadvantage. All who opposed him were struck down with the same merciless and impartial hand. Breakfast, dinner and supper were obtained by compelling farmers to furnish food at his beck and call.

And now he has even gone so far as the great game of hide and seek as to kill his partner, David Merrill, the man who escaped from the penitentiary with him and who, so far as is known, has aided him all along in his hiding from justice.

Gerónimo's Kind Offer Declined.

At the same time Gerónimo, the famous Apache Indian chief, offered his services to the Government to the extent of getting out upon the trail of Tracy and attempting his capture. He has offered to capture the convict and deliver him, dead or alive, to the authorities on his own responsibility. But Uncle Sam is apparently wary in regard to the offer of the Indian chief. Fifteen years ago Gerónimo led several hundred Indians in an expedition to arrest a pair of crooks in Portland, Ore. They had been hunting them for months, but in spite of the fact that the Portland police force is very efficient a long series of daring hold-ups and robberies had been committed and the force felt that its reputation was staked upon the capture of the two robbers, for they always operated together, and so many of the victims had described them with such minuteness that the police were certain all the jobs were done by the one pair. The detectives had worked hard on the cases, and finally came to the conclusion that the two young suspicious-looking fellows who occasionally frequented a house on Market Street, near First, were the much wanted couple. They also learned that the older of the two was David Merrill, who lived in the house with his mother, brother, and stepfather, known crook, originally from Vancouver, Wash., and was a desperate fellow who would put up a fight and was a dead shot. The other fellow was Harry Tracy, of whom they knew little, except that he was a tough customer and as a good marksman.

Capture of Merrill.

One night a posse surrounded Merrill's home and captured him. He was desperate and attempted to put up a fight. The odds, however, were too great and he surrendered, while his mother, wild with excitement, insisted that her son was no criminal and begged the officers not to take him away.

Seeing that her pleadings were vain she began to abuse them and finally denounced Harry Tracy, who, she insisted, had led her son into his waywardness. Then she determined to be revenged upon her son's pal. Her boy was in the toils already, and she was no more than right that Tracy should share his fate. He could be caught, she said, if the officers would follow her advice.

Tracy Took the Train.

"See that train?" asked Tracy. "Yes." "Well, I guess I'll take it. So long," and away he started.

"I guess you won't," replied Weiner, reaching for his revolver.

Tracy was right about it, though, for he leaped into the cab, but not until he

had taken a crack at the detective. Putting his pistol to the engineer's head, he commanded him to pull out with all speed, leaving Weiner painfully, but not seriously, wounded. The news was telephoned ahead, a crowd gathered along the track and when Tracy left the engine he was followed by a howling mob. After an exciting chase he was downed by the officers, one of whom was the detective he had broken away from to catch the locomotive.

Thus these desperate criminals were landed in the Portland jail, lodged in separate cells and recorded in the prison archives of the city.

"Harry Tracy, 25 years of age, 5 feet 10 inches tall, weight 160 pounds, light gray eyes, light hair and mustache, etc."

"David Merrill, 28 years of age, 5 feet 11 inches tall, weight 160 pounds, etc.—with other personal description, but only a shadowy record for their past career. Two months later they were tried and speedily convicted. Merrill was sent up for thirteen years, but Tracy's attempt to kill the detective cost him an extra seven.

Then the pair, heavily manacled and guarded, were taken to Salem, delivered to Warden James, and assigned to work in the stove foundry of the prison.

That Warden J. T. James is a man of experience in dealing with dangerous criminals there can be little doubt, but he had been known to his care was entrusted a pair of desperadoes compared to whom the "bad men" of the West whose exploits fill the pages of sensational literature are peaceful citizens. It is likely that Tracy and Merrill would have been more closely guarded.

Exploits Almost Incredible.

It was, however, not till later that he learned something of the remarkable career of the younger of the two bandits, and when he did he might well have doubted many of Harry Tracy's exploits. They are substantiated by undoubted evidence. They eclipse the boasted escapades of the James gang, "Billy the Kid," "Neville Force," the Younger brothers, and other famous outlaws who soon or later were killed or captured. Since his last escape several statements of his past career are current. One is that he is a half-breed Mexican, one Manuel Albertine, but the most creditable account is given by a former sheriff of Montana, who arrested him for a petty theft in 1890 at Dillon, Mont., where he gave the name of Harry Garr, then nineteen years of age.

Tracy was jailed, but soon effected his escape. The State of Utah still wants Harry Tracy. After his flight Tracy moved about a few months, finally drifting into Colorado, where he naturally fell in with a tough gang of kindred spirits operating near the Utah, Colorado, and Wyoming borders, and passing from one hide-out to another as frequently as the officials of any locality became vigilant.

For a time they were under the leadership of George Curry, who is supposed to have taken part with his leader in the Wilcox train robbery. He is known to have been concerned while in Wyoming in the robbery of a bank at Belle Fourche and that of the postoffice at Big Piney. Here they committed numerous crimes, one of them being the killing of a railroad man, for which Curry was sentenced to a life term in the State Prison at Canon City, but which it is believed by many was the work of Tracy.

Captured by a Posse.

After the killing of Hoy the citizens of the county arose in self-defense, and a posse was organized to capture the freebooters. In a pitched battle fought against deputy sheriffs, Tracy killed Deputy Sheriff Valentine Day and escaped for the time being with Lant, Bennett and Johnstone were captured, and Bennett was at once lynched. Tracy and Lant were captured about six miles from Powder Springs several days later. They had wandered far, their feet were bleeding, and they were so exhausted from the loss of food and sleep that neither was able to hold a gun, although Tracy had one, taken, it is said, from the body of Deputy Sheriff Day.

After their arrest they were placed in the jail at Aspen, Colo., for safe-keeping, and Governor Wells, of Utah, wired Governor Adams, asking that they be turned over to the Utah government. The men on the walls not only consented, but Tracy and Lant held different views on the question. On the night of June 22, 1897, they escaped from the Aspen jail, and in doing so beat jailer Jones into a respectable fellow, who was possessed of a pistol muzzle in his face and heard Tracy say: "Throw up your hands!" Instead of doing so, Sheriff Fisher turned and ran for his life, explaining afterward that he went for help.

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Went to Oregon.

Tracy also disappeared for the time. Seemingly he went straight to Oregon, probably because Merrill, who was also a member of one of the gangs, lived in that part of the country, but very little is definitely known of these two years.

It is also certain that when he and Merrill were finally landed at Salem, Warden James and his assistant superintendent, J. D. Day, underestimated the resourcefulness and daring of their two prisoners and trusted too confidently in the strength of the battle they ruled. At all events, he did not attempt to separate the two men, who continued to work together to labor in the stove foundry of the prison.

On the morning of June 9, 1902, their confidence received a rude shock. Promptly at 7 o'clock the prisoners were paraded to their various workshops and set to their daily task. This done so regularly in every prison that the guards regard it as a bit of routine they do mechanically. Nothing to them is more surprising than to be called upon suddenly to do the very work they are put there for. So it was on the morning of Monday, June 9. No one of many who were in the foundry seems to have seen what occurred. Certain it is that Tracy and Merrill walked to their places as usual. Certain it is that somewhere near the places in which they worked



were two large rifles loaded and ready for work. The two prisoners could not have carried the guns from their cells. No one seems to have seen them seize these rifles, but just as the foundry guard was about to be turned over to Guard Frank B. Farrell and put to work a shot rang out and Farrell fell dead.

Fired at Every Guard.

The stove foundry is next to the wall. A yard surrounds it and thirty feet from the wall is the "dead line." Guards are stationed upon the walls armed with heavy rifles to shoot any luckless or reckless prisoner who crosses that line. Tracy and Merrill rushed to the yard, followed by the guards who had paraded the foundry gang to its work. Near the door Frank Ingham, a life convict, undertook to stop them, only to receive a rifle ball in the leg.

Reaching the yard Tracy, whose shots seldom fail, fired at every guard in the yard. One of the bullets killed Guard S. R. T. Jones, and his fall made every other guard in the place hesitate to expose himself as a target for either of the desperate men. The watchmen returned the fire, however, from all sides and behind shelter, but in the rain of bullets the convicts took a ladder from the side of the foundry, put it up against the twenty-foot wall, climbed up and jumped over.

In the meantime a couple of the watchmen had rushed out of the main gate and circled the outside of the wall, hoping to head off the fugitives. They ran into them face to face, but the quickness born of thorough desperation the convicts had them covered with their rifles. Compelling the officers to drop their guns they made them walk in front of them across the fields, hostages of the good behavior of their fellow-jailers on the walls.

Excitement prevailed throughout the prison. The men on the walls not only derided the danger of their colleagues in the field, fired a volley of shots at the fleeing figure. Immediately the convicts fired on the hostages. Guard B. F. Tiffany fell dead, while his companion, Ross, with sheer fright, dropped to the ground and lay motionless.

Tracy and Merrill were no intent upon escape to give him any thought. They hurried on leaving him to fly back to the prison, where by this time something like order had been restored, for at the first firing it was feared that all the prisoners would attempt to escape. In 1897 such an attempt had been made, and those who remembered it dreaded another.

It was soon seen, however, that the two desperadoes were all in the daring home they had evidently planned to escape to, and that they were not to be taken by surprise. They were held by the fact that Harry Wright, who worked with Tracy and Merrill in the foundry, and was as nearly as prison discipline would permit, a friend and confidant, was released only a few weeks ago. It was thought to explain the mystery. Be it as it may, the rifles got in and the convicts got out. Three guards lost their lives, the life convict, Ingraham, who, in attempting to block the escape, was shot in the leg, has since had the leg amputated and has been pardoned by Governor Greer, of Oregon.

Salem, though the capital of Oregon, is a city of only a little more than 4,000 people, about forty-five miles south of Portland, on the same river—the Willamette. It is surrounded by wild timber land, broken only by occasional farms and rough roads. Tracy and Merrill literally took to the woods, where they spent their first day in hiding. A posse of twenty men followed in hot pursuit, but could find no distinct trail. The first heard of them was about 10 o'clock that night, when they came upon J. W. Stewart, of South Salem, on his way home. They made him take off his clothes and enter his house. So violent and effective were their threats that he

did not inform the officials for fear of the bandits' vengeance. The fugitives also stole enough clothing from an expressman in the vicinity to enable them to discard the prison stripes, and next they appropriated a pair of horses, on which they started northward toward Portland.

Held Up Pursuers.

About noon the next day bloodhounds were put on their trail. Word was wired in all directions, a large reward was offered, and from all sides amateur, as well as professional, detectives, prepared to catch the refugees. Their capture was considered only the question of a few hours.

The next word, however, added some humor to the situation—to those not immediately concerned. Two members of the sheriff's posse had ridden far northward in a buggy. Returning, they were met by the convicts, who, instead of allowing themselves to be taken, held the pursuers and took possession of the horse and buggy, leaving the officers to walk back home. Several times the fleeing convicts dropped in uninvited to meals at various farm houses, where they made no pretense of concealing their identity and even boasted of their exploits. Hospitality that was not freely given was taken anyway, and usually anything else they wanted that was easy to carry. Anyone who resisted was bound and gagged. Occasionally some one of the pursuers got an occasional glimpse of the convicts, but all that is known of them during the first few days of their flight was what was related by residents at whose houses they had stopped for food.

On Sunday afternoon, June 15, they forced a boatman to row them across the Columbia River into the State of Washington, near Vancouver. Merrill's boyhood home. The country was now thoroughly aroused, and it was becoming one of the most remarkable flights in the criminal history of the great Northwest. The pursuit was pushed with more vigor but little success. The marshy nature of the country made the bloodhounds almost useless. The sheriffs along the line to the northward organized posses and scoured the country, but the elusive

desperadoes were always ahead of them or easily escaped through their cordons when surrounded.

It was near Vancouver that more bloodshed was added to their long list, though they themselves did not commit the crime. William Morris, a member of the pursuing party, was mistaken for one of the convicts by another member of the party. He was fired upon and seriously, though not fatally, wounded.

Avoided the Crows.

Avoiding the railroad and skirting around the larger towns, where they knew that large forces of heavily armed men lay in wait for them, the fugitives continued another 100 miles almost due northward through the only thickly settled strip of country in that part of Washington—that along the line of the Northern Pacific, the only line connecting Portland with Puget Sound. At any time they chose they could have gone a few miles east and been lost among the foothills of the Cascade Mountains, absolutely free from pursuit.

His Name in the Pot.

Some time during the night of July 1 Harry Tracy arrived at Olympia alone. How he spent the time between his arrival and sunrise of the following day he alone can tell, but he certainly made his way to the water front, and long before the mist had cleared up over the little fishing camp of the Capital City Oyster Company, at South Bay, Tracy appeared on the scene. A couple of men were preparing breakfast at a tent near the shore of Puget Sound, while a gasoline launch lay a few feet away. The bandit calmly announced that his "name was in the pot," and when he told them what his name was they did not dispute the fact. When the meal was prepared he requested the men to stand quietly in full view at the back of the tent while he partook of some coffee, bacon, and fried potatoes. During the meal he inquired about the launch. When told that it belonged to Captain Clark, a Seattle electrician in the employ of the company, Tracy ordered that the captain be sent for.

The captain, mistaking the summons for a customary call to breakfast, entered the tent, sat down and began to eat. Knowing that hunger is painful to some men, Tracy did not disturb him, while the captain, on the other hand, thought the silent, none too handsome man in the chair was his old friend of his men, and asked no questions. Through with his meal, Captain Clark rose from the plain board table and idly thrust his hands into his pockets.

"Take your hands out of your pockets," commanded the hitherto silent stranger.

"Who are you?" demanded the captain.

"Tracy!"

The captain thought it was all a practical joke set up by the men, but it was not many moments before he realized the truth. Tracy explained that he relied upon the launch to take him up the sound, and directed how it should be done. Two of the six men about the place were tied securely and left in the tent. Captain Clark, his son, and the other men were told to man the launch. They did so, the outlaw, in his hand, seating himself in one end of the cabin and keeping his improvised crew in full view. They left the bay about 10 o'clock and made their way up the sound.

Helped Fix the Engine.

When once he had made himself clearly understood by his crew, Harry Tracy behaved with some gracefulness. He once helped fix the engine when it got somewhat out of repair, but during most of the trip he carefully guarded his crew and directed the movements of the boat. Once only he gave the firemen something like an opportunity to attack him. That was when he turned about to shoot at a seal. Captain Clark saw the chance, but was not quick enough to take it. Sometimes he nodded and dozed a little, but any time one of the crew moved he opened his eyes and brought his rifle into position.

He talked freely about his flight through two States, but made no mention of all that was his story of Merrill. He had killed him, he said, and his narrative is decidedly thrilling.

At Tacoma a tug sailed near the launch. Its crew had recognized the launch, and, knowing its commander, steamed toward it. Tracy seemed worried.

"I guess I'll take a crack at that fellow at the wheel," he said, as he prepared to do so, and it required all of Tracy's self-control to induce him to give up the idea.

Then the outlaw changed his mind about landing at Tacoma, and ordered that he be taken on to Seattle. If the crew objected, they did not do so audibly, and on to Seattle they went.

Later in the afternoon when within sight of Seattle, Tracy said:

"Don't push her too hard, Cap. I don't want to get into Seattle before dark."

The bandit seemed entirely familiar with the water front of the city, but was very uncertain where to land. After changing his mind frequently he finally ordered a landing made at Meadmoor Point, near Ballard, a suburb a few miles north of the city, at about 6:30 o'clock, July 2.

Bound the Crew.

The outlaw prepared to disembark, but in this, as in former instances, he took no chances. Picking out Frank Scott, one of the crew, as the one most likely to obey him, he commanded him to bind Captain Clark and the others and to accompany him on shore.

"Good-by, Cap," said Tracy. "You've been kind to me, and I'll reward you. I'll have a stack soon after I get into Seattle, and then I'll pay you for your trouble."

Then, carefully guarding Scott, they made of toward Ballard. They reached the suburb in darkness, and for a time wandered about, apparently without definite aim. This taking Scott with him seemed but a whim, and as they sat resting on the railroad track the outlaw explained that he wanted to buy a policeman and get a revolver. Evidently he was very anxious to get into the city, did not want to do so with his rifle, and was unwilling to risk it unarmed. In a short time he sent Scott back to the launch, where Captain Clark and his companions had managed to untie themselves, but were

waiting, uncertain what to do. On Scott's return, about 10 o'clock, word was sent to the Kings county authorities.

When Tracy changed his mind about landing at Tacoma he probably made a mistake, for Seattle and Kings county have intense the preservation of their peace to one of the pioneer heroes of law and order in the Northwest. Sheriff Ed Cuddehe is known throughout all that country as the bravest and the best of the officers of the old school who were used to dealing with such desperadoes. He and his brother John went to Colorado from the timber camps of Michigan and settled in Leadville. An organization of ruffians terrorized that town, murdering any official who undertook to check their lawlessness. They finally made it so strong that the good citizens made a general demand of the mayor to rid the town of the outlaws.

The mayor responded by organizing a posse to exterminate the gang, and among the first volunteers were the Cuddehe brothers. Both were strangers to fear, but Ed combined with physical courage an intelligence that soon made him a captain and eventually a leader of the posse that completely annihilated the gang and restored order in the town. Then Ed Cuddehe found life as a policeman a trifle monotonous in Leadville, so he moved farther west, joining the police force of Seattle, he became a detective, then chief of detectives, and about a year ago was elected sheriff of the county.

Had Tracy known this, he might have avoided Seattle, or, at least, have approached it more carefully, for as soon as Jack Williams, the first of Cuddehe's deputies to hear of the matter, learned that Tracy was in Kings county he prepared for trouble. He immediately sent word to his chief, and then, accompanied by another deputy and a newspaper man, he set out in search of the bandit.

Tired and Sleepy.

When Tracy sent Scott back to the launch he was evidently lonely, tired, and sleepy. What he did during the time is uncertain. He may have gone into the city and come out again, or he may have slept in a barn or fence row.

In the meantime Sheriff Cuddehe arrived and took charge of the hunt. Not since he fired the first gun in the prison at Salem was the desperate outlaw in the danger he was while Cuddehe was on his trail. The veteran man hunter was in his element. He knew he had tracked Tracy to Fremont, where he learned that he had stopped at Mrs. Van Horn's. The sheriff's arrival attracted some attention, and Officer Enoch E. Breece and Neil Rawley volunteered to join the sheriff. Cuddehe urged them not to follow, but they disregarded his advice, and, as shown later, paid their lives for the privilege of enabling the noted desperado to escape the one man who could have landed him.

Cuddehe's Tactics.

Cuddehe knew that there was but one successful way to fight Tracy, and that was by adopting his own tactics, namely, shooting from ambush. He knew perfectly well that Tracy was a crack shot and would fire at the drop of a hat—that he had every advantage in being well armed and utterly oblivious to all consequences. Cuddehe reasoned that there was only one way to get Tracy, and that was to shoot him from cover, when he was unaware of danger. He determined to take the chance of losing his man, and told the others who wanted to accompany him to the scene of the fight to stay away if they valued their lives.

The sheriff drove 100 yards beyond the Van Horn house and then left the buggy, carrying Jack Williams' rifle in his hands. He also had his revolver. Steadily he crept back to the house and got inside the park and concealed himself behind a stump. He located himself so that he could watch the cottage and could have a good range, covering Tracy when he came from the house, whether he went to one side or the other of the team. The sheriff figured that Tracy would take John to the wagon again and make him drive away in the darkness.

The next thing the sheriff saw, after waiting a few minutes, was three men emerging from the house. One walked between the other two, and was Tracy, and he carried a gun. The sheriff got ready for action and was preparing for Tracy to get within close range, when Breece, J. L. McKnight, and Rawley rushed up out of the darkness. Breece, standing with gun in hand, about ten paces from Tracy, shouted:

"Throw down that gun, Tracy!"

Immediately Tracy wheeled and fired point blank at the officer. Then he fired again and again, a stump, he located himself so that he could watch the cottage and could have a good range, covering Tracy when he came from the house, whether he went to one side or the other of the team. The sheriff figured that Tracy would take John to the wagon again and make him drive away in the darkness.

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Both fell to the ground. With an oath Tracy turned, looked for more victims, and then dashed through the fence about seventy-five yards to the east of Cuddehe.

Was a Bad Shot.

The sheriff leveled his rifle at the rapidly disappearing convict and fired twice. Evidently neither shot took effect. Tracy then disappeared into the darkness and the dense brush of the park, going in a southeasterly direction. Rawley lay on the ground gasping for breath and groaning pitifully, the blood pouring from a wound dead. He had never uttered a word.

Since that time the bandit has scudded about the city in a most bewildering manner. Hard pressed, he crossed a neck of the sound, stole a ship, and fled some thirty-five or forty miles up toward the Canadian line. The revenue cutter Grant pursued this boat.

Capture seemed certain, when suddenly the desperado reappears near the scene of the first fight, making off in a southeasterly direction toward the Cascade Mountains. The region toward which he is traveling is inaccessible, and unless accidentally shot before he gets far, it is certain that for the present he is beyond the reach of the law.

He has killed nine men since his escape and seriously wounded three more. Countless thefts of horses, clothes, and money are charged against him. He has also fought more combats single-handed against crowds, and held his own more successfully, than any of the historic desperadoes of the old days. In fact, he has eclipsed all records, and established a new mark in American criminal history that it is to be hoped will not soon be equaled.